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ABSTRACT

Following consideration of many reports on the status of public education, the Utah State Board of Education announces its commitment to the reform of the content, processes, and standards of public education in Utah. The board sets as its primary goals the attainment of excellence in education and the improvement of productivity. The reform will be directed initially toward key recommendations outlined in the following five areas: (1) curriculum reform, (2) enhancing teaching as a profession, (3) improved planning for vocational-technical education, (4) utilization of physical resources, and (5) public and parental involvement in decision-making. (MLF)

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Action Goals of the Utah State Board of Education

COMMENCING IN 1984

EA 017 209

The Utah State Board of Education sets as its primary goals the attainment of excellence in education and the improvement of productivity* as expressed in the following objectives.

*The State Board of Education considers productivity in education to have several definitions, all of which are important in providing excellence in education: (1) teaching an increased number of students for a given amount of money while maintaining current quality, (2) increasing quality for a given amount of money and a given number of students, and (3) increasing quality through increasing expenditures.

I. Curriculum Reform

The Utah State Board of Education, after due consideration of the many reports on the status of public education in Utah and the Nation, is fully committed to the reform of the content, processes and standards of public education in Utah. Such reform will be directed initially towards the key recommendations that follow.

A. Curriculum Content

1. Schools will concentrate on a core curriculum: reading, language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and related core subjects. Schools will set a minimum amount of time during the day and year which must be allocated to core educational subjects.
2. Schools will provide sufficient curriculum options above and beyond the basic core subjects for students interested in a wide variety of career options such as college education, high technology specialization, advanced vocational training, job entry after high school, and sheltered workshops.
3. The education curricula will include additional emphasis on "higher level thinking skills." Opportunities for developing such skills are especially applicable to social studies, humanities, and the arts.

4. Greater emphasis must be given to programs for the gifted and talented.
5. Greater emphasis will be given to citizenship education programs as outlined in the "Position Paper on Citizenship Education."

B. Instructional Processes and Learning Time

1. Schools will increase the proportion of time spent on academic learning in comparison to time spent in class and in school by implementing the findings and strategies contained in the "effective schools" and other related research. (This should occur before consideration is given to expanding the school day or the school year. However, pilot studies concerning the extension of the school day and/or year are encouraged.)
2. Schools will search for and eliminate unproductive time periods; i.e., before and after holidays, opening and closing of school year, Fridays, etc. (Friday should be a full instructional day.)
3. Excessive interruptions during the school day, such as announcements, administrative detail work, and extracurricular activities will be reduced or eliminated where possible.
4. Teachers will be relieved of administrative duties and clerical tasks through the use of volunteers, computers, and other technologies so that additional time can be spent on instructional activities.
5. The quality and quantity of homework will be evaluated concerning its value as a crucial part of the overall learning experience.

C. Standards

1. Revised curriculum standards, guidelines, and expected educational outcomes for elementary and secondary schools will be identified and established. Programs for implementing and meeting such standards will remain the responsibility of local school boards.
2. Schools and school districts will schedule extracurricular activities outside school hours.
3. Schools will establish and enforce more stringent standards of student discipline and behavior.
4. Schools will set reasonable academic standards which students must meet before participating in extracurricular activities .
5. Minimum standards of proficiency will be established at all levels. Proficiency must be met before advancement to the next level, e.g., elementary to middle school, etc. The State Board will develop broad general standards for testing criteria. Testing will be handled at the local level.
6. Measures will be taken to improve and strengthen the accreditation process to ensure quality schools. Accreditation will continue to be on a voluntary basis; however, lists of accredited and unaccredited schools will be published for public information.
7. Textbooks and other learning tools will be upgraded and updated to assure more rigorous content. The State Office of Education and school districts will evaluate texts and other materials on their ability to present rigorous and challenging material clearly.

II. Enhancing Teaching as a Profession

Teaching careers will be improved with the aim of attracting, retaining, and rewarding nighly qualified teachers. The following recommendations are pertinent in achieving this goal:

A. Salaries

1. An incentive program for teachers must be created which will attract and hold superior teachers. This involves not only better monetary rewards but increased mobility in terms of expectations and responsibility.
2. Salaries will be market sensitive, performance based, and professionally competitive.
3. A three-step [four-step] opportunity ladder for teachers will be created which will include "Apprentice Teacher," "Professional Teacher," and "Teacher Leader/Master Teacher" levels with appropriate responsibilities and rewards at each level.

B. Working Conditions/Professional Considerations

1. Steps will be taken to improve the working conditions of teachers so that they have greater involvement in important school decisions.
2. Procedures will be established which will involve teachers more directly and more aggressively in school and classroom administration, in the improvement of their profession, and in community affairs.
3. Teachers will be relieved of administrative duties and clerical tasks that interfere with their teaching effectiveness.
4. A teacher evaluation process will be developed in which districts consider at least five input sources: the peer group, the principal, the students, workload, and other performance criteria, e.g., student testing parental evaluations, etc.
5. A statute will be proposed for legislative action that will define "in loco parentis" rights and duties and will strengthen the capability of the Professional Practices Commission to deal with discipline-caused problems.

C. Teacher Preparation and Certification

1. School districts and colleges of education will form stronger and more interactive working relationships so that the teacher training process is a combined responsibility of both organizations. The coordination of programs between higher education and public education will be improved.

2. The Utah Teaching Scholarship program (normal scholarships) will be revised. Requirements will be strengthened to raise the academic level of scholarship recipients. Components will be added which will (a) encourage non-teaching professionals to transfer into the teaching profession, and (b) encourage qualified students to seek teaching careers in the fields of science and mathematics. The payback provision in the current law should be rescinded.
3. Legislation will be proposed to institute a system of tax credits for the purpose of encouraging business and industry to increase contributions to education. (Such contributions could be used to fund scholarship programs in specific fields.)
4. Teacher certification requirements will be revised with the aim of establishing a system of subject matter certification. Certified teachers must have a major, minor, or demonstrated competency in the area or areas in which they teach. A system of periodic review and recertification of all teachers will be instituted. Such a system should not be based solely on college credit.
5. Programs must be implemented to improve the effectiveness of school administrators as instructional leaders.

III. Improved Planning for Vocational-Technical Education

The Vocational-Technical Education Master Planning Committee will complete its work with a report that contains the following information:

A. A definition of vocational-technical education.
B. Complementary roles for secondary schools, area vocational centers, and post-secondary institutions.
C. Policies to ensure adequate levels of funding for quality vocational education programs throughout the education system.

D. Policies to aid education institutions to respond effectively to the Job Training Partnership Act.
E. Recommendations to improve the joint utilization of public and higher education instructional facilities.
F. Recommendations to provide greater access to vocational-technical training programs throughout the state but particularly in rural areas.

All vocational-technical education programs will be coordinated with other curricular reforms to ensure consistency and program articulation.

IV. Utilization of Physical Resources

Measures will be taken to maximize the use of existing facilities and to provide needed school building facilities to accommodate increasing numbers of students. Every effort will be made to improve building utilization and to use alternatives to new construction. Scheduling patterns made possible by extended-year programs, double sessions, and year-round programs will be fully explored and implemented where possible.

The Board is committed to the better utilization of information technologies (computers and telecommunication devices) to enhance the quality of instructional programs and management systems. The utilization of high technology devices will be fully explored to assess their contributions to increase productivity and program quality throughout the school system.

V. Public and Parental Involvement in Decision-Making

Increased efforts will be made to involve the public in general and parents in particular in working with teachers, administrators, and other school staff in making decisions that affect the quality and effectiveness of public schools.

The Board reaffirms its view that an individualized education plan is a vital ingredient in quality education. The Student Education Plan (SEP) will be required of each student and developed with full participation of students, parents, teachers, and other appropriate school staff. The SEP will include the amount of time devoted to extracurricular activities.

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